

Det. 7
Barrow

Sabin # 3670

Letter
[Barrow] 350

Holland House
1819

A

LETTER TO JOHN BARROW, ESQ.

ON

THE POLAR EXPEDITIONS.

(Price One Shilling.)

LETTERS TO JOHN BARRINGTON

NO

THE POLAR EXPEDITION

1845

CHARLES WOOD, Printer,
Poppin's Court, Fleet Street, London.

A
L E T T E R
TO
J O H N B A R R O W, E S Q.
ON
THE SUBJECT
OF
THE POLAR EXPEDITIONS;
OR,
THE REVIEWER REVIEWED.

“There thou might'st behold the great image of authority—a Dog's
obey'd in office.”
LEAR.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.
1819.

9700

998

L651

31 38 47 54 61

A

L E T T E R,

&c. &c.

SIR;

To you is ascribed, and I believe with great justice, the almost entire management of our late endeavours to ascertain the existence of a North West and a Polar Passage to Behring's Straits; to you therefore, who undertook to play so leading a character in this Arctic Performance, I beg leave to address a few words, upon a subject

B

184418

as interesting, as circumstances connected with it have appeared extraordinary.

In a work compiled by you, giving a chronological history of the Discoveries in the Arctic Regions, there is, towards its close, a most inexplicable statement, entitled, the "Discoveries of Ross, Buchan, Parry, and Franklin."

May I request to be informed, for the benefit of the public, in what possible manner the discoveries of these officers could have been written previously to their return home, and before it was known *whether any discoveries really had been made*, or what had been the issue of their efforts?

How this could have been effected, you may perhaps have sufficient sagacity to find out; whether the rest of the world may be capable of comprehending such a paradox, I will not venture to predict!

The *fact* is, that the paper in question does not contain one word relative to the subject on which it professes to treat; it bears only upon its face the strongest evidence of being a florid account of your own feats, in which you quote* your own writings, to prove your own assertions!

It is the puff of an empiric upon himself, in which he endeavours to

* Note to page 376, of *Voyages into the Polar Regions*.

anticipate the event of our late expedition, by preoccupying the public mind with an high sounding statement of its fitness, its liberal equipment, and its scientific and disinterested arrangements. To me, the account alluded to is, I confess, in perfect unison with the same vaunting self-conceit, with the addition only of a little cunning, which dictated your unmanly remarks upon Captain Burney, and your unjustifiable attack upon Lieutenant Chapple. In the one case you attempt to refute the arguments of an old and distinguished officer, *who has actually been to the place of which he treats*, by telling him, that his respectable old age has destroyed

his memory ! and you make a zealous young officer the butt of your unfeeling sarcasms, solely for the purpose of introducing to the world your own ideas upon the practicability of a North West Passage to the Pacific. In the other, you contrive to write Discoveries, *not yet made*, in order to persuade the world, that of all expeditions, that of which you had the direction was the best, and the most efficient, that human wisdom ever yet planned ; and thus endeavour to veil the blundering, rapacious self-sufficiency, which struck Baffin's Bay, that " gratuitous boundary," from the charts of the Northern Latitudes.

On this subject, however, I will

be silent, and extend to your false premises and fallacious conclusions, that lenity, which, had you shown to others, would have been more creditable to yourself.

How far, as is stated in these so-called Discoveries*, that "every suggestion that appeared to merit consideration was attended to," or at least how far they were attended to with that propriety which was due to the rank and zeal of those by whom they were offered, I leave to your own *conscience* to answer; and I *could* refer you to a letter, signed "John Barrow," in which the sneer of fancied superiority, the gall of criticism, and the insolence of

* Page 370 of *Voyages to the Polar Regions*.

office, are so thoroughly and curiously combined, that it forms a compound of all that could be either offensive or disgusting; and it proves, that, by you at least, anxiety for the service is accounted only for impertinent interference. Whatever may be the estimation in which *you* hold the zeal of officers for the welfare of the service, others think differently; and it may therefore be an act of friendship to remind you, of the station which you fill, and of the acceptation in which the world consider it. They deem the Secretary of a Public Board to be the humble *organ* of its resolutions, which it is his duty to *communicate*

with decency and civility, "reverence and respect."

You next proceed* to inform us, that the officers sailed "in the full confidence of attaining the great object of the Expeditions, or at least with the determination of establishing the fact of its utter impracticability."

Whether these your Arctic Prophecies have been fulfilled, in this or any other particular, recent events have rendered it unnecessary for the public to inquire; but of this I would inform you, that the officers of his Majesty's Navy never have, and I believe from my soul never will require any such paragraphs as

* Page 370.

these, either to stimulate their exertions or enhance the confidence which their countrymen repose in them. Like other fallible beings, they may want success, from accident, from an error in judgment, or *from being tied down by the orders they receive*: that they ever did quit the shores of England, but with the firmest resolutions of fulfilling the trust reposed in them, or of establishing the impossibility of its performance, no one but yourself ever yet deemed it requisite to contemplate.

We are told also, that where certain objects of Natural History could not be preserved, "accurate drawings would be made of them by such and such officers." Allow me to remark, that if these Expe-

ditions were properly equipped, it was fair to presume, that all these circumstances would follow as corollaries to a scientific undertaking; and that a great Expedition, performed by the first maritime nation in the world, ought not to have stood in need of having its merits and its probable benefits set forth in a shape so questionable as this, bearing indeed no faint resemblance to the hand bill of a conjuror, or the programme of a French spectacle. Again, it would appear extremely odd, that among the various things set forth in your list of officers, instruments, and artists, the names of any nautical and scientific draughtsmen do not once occur. How is this? Were they unnecessary, or could none be found?

That one of these cases is correct, the detailed accuracy with which other portions of this Expedition have been set forth renders it almost impossible to doubt. Of these points some explanation will I hope be given, or else the world cannot but suppose, that where such bolstering and propping was deemed right, there must have been something "rotten in the state of Denmark."

In another passage of the wonderful book in question, the public are informed by you, with much pomp and circumstance*, that two gentlemen, one a young man, who it seems was on the point of taking orders, and the other an officer of artillery, were

* Page 367, Polar Voyages.

recommended by the Royal Society as astronomers to the Expeditions, and to perform its scientific duties. Alas! our gallant Navy, how are they lessened in their own, how degraded in the eyes of others. "*Quantum mutatus.*"

Gracious Heaven! shall it be told in England, and will it be believed, that the Navy of England, whose skill and science have enabled them to explore the trackless deep in every clime, and to hunt our enemies from pole to pole, should be unable to produce even *two* officers capable of being astronomers to such an Expedition? Are the Navy then so fallen, that military men and civilians must supersede them in *their own* profession? Are sailors

to command armies, and soldiers fleets?
 Or are our seamen to be insulted
 and neglected, and made the victims
 of intrigue, by those very persons who
 should most strenuously support them?

I shall perhaps be told, that as
 the object was general science, talent
 was to be sought in every quarter.
 The object no doubt was general sci-
 ence; but it was only to be attained
 by naval means; and while that ser-
 vice *did* possess one man adequate to
 the duties which were required, he
 and he only should have been em-
 ployed. It is an imputation upon the
 Navy, which they feel, and an eternal
 stigma upon those who cast it.

Be these things as they may, both Expeditions have now failed, whether from the fault of those who arranged, or those who executed them, we have yet to learn, and shall no doubt be *very candidly* informed; as well by seeing the orders issued to the commanders on the subject of their voyage, as by having the return of one of them accounted for, apparently from the very entrance of that passage, the existence and investigation of which was the peculiar object of the enterprize. That these things should attach themselves to *the officers*, we can scarcely suppose, since they were, by your statements, selected with the most scru-

pulous disregard to interest, and from the most satisfactory proofs of their mathematical and nautical acquirements. In every way, however, whatever blame there may be, it must rest with those who directed these undertakings: were they ill planned, they alone are answerable; were the officers ill selected, then they are doubly responsible, to the country, for compromising its honour, and to these brave men, for sending them to lose and not to gain distinction: for *you* should remember, that as men are born with different capacities, so they are to be variously applied: that each one is best in his proper sphere; Soldiers on land, Sailors at sea, Clergy-

men in the pulpit, and Secretaries
transmitting, not presuming to give
orders.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient humble Servant,

A FRIEND TO THE NAVY.

THE END.

CHARLES WOOD, Printer,
Poppin's Court, Fleet Street, London.

retaries

give

vant,

NAVY.